

(Desmarest), in the thatchland of Rajagarh have assisted in reducing the Hispid Hare population in the area. The village dogs are also said to prey upon this slow-moving animal at times.

The thatchland of Rajagarh offers protection to at least two threatened species, the Hispid Hare and the Pigmy Hog.

The following measures should be taken for

their conservation:

(1) The habitat should be preserved by preventing further infiltration of human settlements, (2) all hunting should be prohibited, (3) the thatchland should be protected from forest fire, and the seasonal collection of 'Borangamni Kher', banned (6) efforts should be made to educate the local people on the value of the two species.

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#### 4. BLACKBUCK (*ANTILOPE CERVICAPRA* LINN.) AT POINT CALIMERE

##### INTRODUCTION

One of the largest remaining populations of *Antilope cervicapra* Linn. is at the Point Calimere Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu. Daniel (1967) estimated the population of blackbuck at 750. Nair (1976) made a survey in 1974 and estimated the population at 340. These authors may also be referred to for habitat description etc. At the beginning of 1977 there were newspaper reports that the blackbuck were dying in large numbers. The officials of the forest department undertook a census in early 1977 and estimated the number of blackbuck at around 1500, and with this reassuring figure, the forest department allayed the fears of conservationists.

A census of the blackbuck was however undertaken by members of the Wildlife Conservation Society, Tiruchirapalli from 26th to 29th May 1977.

##### BLACKBUCK CENSUS

Most of the blackbuck live in the coastal strip of the sanctuary, and only a few were

noted inside the reserve forest. The census party of 15 members was divided into 5 groups, each equipped with a pair of binoculars. The total direct visual count method was adopted. Three groups were deployed in the southern part of the sanctuary and the remaining two groups in the eastern part of the sanctuary. Every group started from the base line namely, the sea and proceed landward counting the animals present on their rightside only. In enumerating the animals the following classification was followed: Adult males, Subadult males, Females and Fawns. A total of 506 animals were counted, (Table 1) distributed in 38 herds. The herd size varied from 1 (made up of a lone male) to a maximum of 49. There were three bachelor clubs consisting entirely of males numbering 3 to 7. 16.4% of the population was male; and 11.3% was adult male. 401 or 79.2% of the total population were females. The sex ratio is 1 male for 5 females.

##### BIOTIC DISTURBANCES

About 600 domestic cattle (cows and buffaloes) were found grazing side by side with

the antelopes. Though there is a move on the part of the forest department to stop issuing grazing permits, grazing cannot be completely ruled out till the temple lands and the village forest are also acquired by the forest department.

The animals did not allow the enumerators to approach them, keeping a flight distance of nearly 200-300 yards. This is in strange contrast to the observation of Daniel (1967) that "There was no movement from the depth of one counting sector into the next mainly due to the fact that the animals showed little fear of man". The high flight distance maintained by the antelopes shows that there is poaching going on and that the animals have learnt to keep out of rifle range from man. Daniel (1967) had observed a greater percentage of males, the sex ratio being 1:2. But at present the number of males is much lower, the sex ratio being 1:5. This reduction in the number of males also indicates that poaching is going on, the males being preferred by the poachers. In spite of the fact that lopping is prohibited, the enumerators met on every day of their work in the sanctuary a number of women cutting and carrying firewood from the sanctuary. This human movement is quite likely to disturb the antelopes. There are also a number of jackals and wild pigs roaming the forest. The jackals are the main predators of blackbuck, devouring the very young fawns.

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Society, Tiruchirapalli, who participated in the Survey.

TABLE 1

SHOWING THE NUMBER OF HERDS SIGHTED AND THEIR COMPOSITION

Group	Adult male	Sub adult male	Female	Fawn	Total
I	1	2	4	—	7
	4	—	8	—	12
	3	1	22	—	26
	4	—	33	1	38
	2	1	31	1	35
	4	—	45	—	49
	1	—	3	—	4
II	3	—	—	—	3
	—	1	6	—	7
	—	—	4	—	4
	—	—	9	—	9
	1	—	1	1	3
III	1	—	26	—	27
	1	—	—	—	1
	2	—	8	—	10
	1	6	—	—	7
	1	—	1	—	2
	—	—	1	—	1
	—	—	9	—	9
	1	—	—	—	1
	1	—	6	2	9
	1	—	38	7	46
IV	—	—	2	—	2
	3	—	2	—	5
	1	—	3	—	4
	1	1	15	—	17
	—	2	13	—	15
	3	—	—	—	3
	—	—	17	—	17
	1	—	3	—	4
V	1	—	—	—	1
	2	—	46	2	50
	2	—	1	2	5
	2	—	18	2	22
	3	—	29	4	36
	1	—	1	—	2

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

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5. A WILDBOAR (*SUS SCROFA*) SHARING WILDDOGS' (*CUON ALPINUS*) KILL

On 10.vi.1977 while going along a game track watching for wilddogs at 0635 hrs. I saw a chital stag with 40-45 cm long horns in velvet running past me followed by a dhole. Before I could get into a cover the dhole saw me and abruptly stopped. Meanwhile I heard a sambar fawn being killed by the rest of the pack inside the nearby scrub. While I was searching for the kill the wild dogs smelt and saw me, growled and ran away. I retreated back climbed a tree and waited for the pack to return.

The pack which I was studying then had 8 adults and 8 six month old pups and I could hear the loud squeaking of the pups, audible even at a distance of 200 metres, from the nearby cover. At 0705 hrs one dhole went to the kill and by 0716 hrs the entire pack was eating. The scrub was dense and from my perch, which was nearly 50 metres away from

the kill, only occasionally was I able to see the dogs eating. The fawn, being a small one, was soon torn into pieces and I could hear the dogs feeding within a radius of 20-30 metres.

At 0740 hrs I saw 3 dogs growling and running away. Worried and irritated that some local villager had come to take away the kill I was about to get down when I saw a medium-sized wild boar with its mane raised, grunting and walking amidst the dogs. The wild boar is a good scavenger on kill remains but I was surprised to see it among the wilddogs.

Here was an instance in which a wildpig, a prey animal of the wilddog, had shared the kill, a fact I verified later while searching for the jaw of the fawn. The sambar fawn could have provided each dog with hardly 1 kg meat and this is very little when compared to the